

## **Medicare Rx Update: May 15, 2006**

### **Enrollment numbers are impressive as today's deadline nears...**

Today is the last day of the initial enrollment period for Medicare Prescription Drug program and the level of activity is impressive. In the past few days nearly 600,000 additional people with Medicare have signed up for prescription drug coverage and this past weekend saw five times as many people enroll on line as any other previous weekend. We have staffed 1-800-MEDICARE with over 6,000 customer service representatives to eliminate significant wait times, and we have hundreds of our own expert staff to help as well.

To help facilitate smooth enrollment in these last hours before the midnight deadline, please ask beneficiaries to follow the three simple steps... have your Medicare card handy, line up your current prescriptions, and either call 1-800-MEDICARE for personalized assistance over the phone or go online [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) to enroll. Over 40,000 users at a time have used [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) with no wait time. In addition, they may attend one of the hundreds of events our partners are holding across the country today. Remember, even if beneficiaries do not have prescription drug needs now, we encourage them to choose a plan so they will have the coverage they need if something happens in the future. They can always pick a low priced plan... peace of mind is worth the small investment.

We are very pleased that so many have enrolled. Thanks to the work of so many partners, and pharmacists in particular, we have a real opportunity of ensuring that 90% of people with Medicare have some form of prescription drug coverage.

### **Reminder...today is the last day of the drug card program**

Please see the attached guidance to pharmacists concerning the end of the Medicare Prescription Drug Discount Card Program. All Medicare-approved Drug Discount Card sponsoring organizations have been informed that access to discounts and transitional assistance must be available to beneficiaries through 11:59 p.m. local time on May 15, 2006. Thereafter, all Medicare Prescription Drug Discount Card benefits (both discounts and transitional assistance) must be discontinued and discount cards deactivated. Please note that this does not apply to pharmaceutical manufacturer or state patient assistance programs.

CMS recognizes that pharmacies may get former Drug Card members attempting to use their Drug Card following the conclusion of the Drug Card program. Pharmacists should notify the beneficiary that the Drug Discount Card program has ended, and refer the beneficiary to the Customer Service department of their Drug Card, or to 1-800-MEDICARE.

Sign up for the **PHARMACY\_MMA-L** list to receive the Medicare Rx Update at:  
<http://new.cms.hhs.gov/apps/maillinglists/>



**Pharmacy Advisement  
Medicare Prescription Drug Discount Card Program:  
End of Program Guidance for Pharmacists**

The purpose of this document is to advise pharmacists serving Medicare beneficiaries of the termination of the Medicare Drug Discount Card Program on May 15, 2006.

All Medicare-approved Drug Discount Card sponsoring organizations have been informed that access to discounts and transitional assistance must be available to beneficiaries through 11:59p.m. local time on May 15, 2006. Thereafter, all Medicare Prescription Drug Discount Card benefits (both discounts and transitional assistance) must be discontinued and discount cards deactivated.

Sponsoring organizations are required to maintain a telephone number, which notifies beneficiaries that the program has ended and provides the opportunity for beneficiaries to file a grievance through July 15, 2006.

Although not required, CMS has encouraged sponsoring organizations with drug card members, as of May 1, 2006, to consider sending members a letter advising them that the Drug Card Program ends on May 15, 2006 and encourage them to enroll in a Part D plan by that date. All sponsoring organizations were required to send an end of program notice in the Fall of 2005.

Sponsors have been asked to work with their pharmacies to resolve claim reversals and late claim filings by August 15, 2006. Sponsors may at their discretion consider requests from pharmacies to reverse transitional assistance claims if the claim needs to be billed to a Part D sponsor (e.g., if the beneficiary has a retroactive Part D effective date). The pharmacy must ensure that the Part D claim is accepted by the plan sponsor and the Drug Card Sponsor accepts the reversal transaction so the pharmacy does not receive reimbursement through both programs. Sponsors are not required to extend their usual window for claims reversals, but may do so at their option by working with pharmacies requesting this service.

Additionally, CMS recognizes that pharmacies may get former Drug Card members attempting to use their Drug Card following the conclusion of the Drug Card program. Pharmacists should notify the beneficiary that the Drug Discount Card program has ended, and refer the beneficiary to the Customer Service department of their Drug Card, or to 1-800-MEDICARE.

If you have additional questions please contact Angela Stanley at 410-786-9496.